

The Early History of European Federation of Medical Informatics

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He was a member of the Organizing Committee for the first Medinfo in Stockholm 1974 and he was appointed as a Founding father for both the EFMI (1976) and IMIA at the constituent meetings (1979), Stockholm, Sweden

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Review

ABSTRACT

The story of the European Federation of Medical Informatics (EFMI) can be looked upon as one of the followers from the early days of the development of Societies and federations for persons interested in Information Technology and in cooperation and exchange of information and technology, not only in countries but also between countries.

Key words: IFIP, IMIA, EFMI, History.

1. FROM VISION TO REALITY

In 1957, I. L. Auerbach, USA sent a proposal to Unesco on behalf of the American Federation of Information Processing Societies to sponsor one international conference on information processing. The first international conference on information processing was held in 1959 in Paris with 1800 participants from 37 countries. Representatives of some national societies had submitted statutes and sent them out to the national societies and had them approved. A provisional executive with Mr. Auerbach and Academician Anatol A. Doronicyan, Union of Socialist Republics was elected. (1-10)

The first council meeting was held in Rome in June 1960 and that is the beginning of the Internal Federation for Information Processing (IFIP). Already at that meeting 15 countries were members: Belgium, Canada, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Japan, The Netherlands, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, United Kingdom and United States of America. Mr. Auerbach was elected President, Professor Alwin Walter, Germany vice-president and Dr. Ambrose Speiser, Switzerland, secretary-treasurer. The work within IFIP was organized in Technical Committees (TC) and they in turn could have Working Groups (WG). Already in 1963 the first 3 were established: TC 1 Glossary, TC 2 Programming Languages and TC 3 Education (11-19).

In 1967 TC 4 Health Care and Biomedical Research was established with Professor Francois Gremy, France as Chairman and J. M. Forsythe, United Kingdom as Secretary.

The first Working group (WG1) was Education of Medical and Paramedical Personnel. In 1973 a new chairman Jan Roukens, Holland was elected. He was Chairman until the date when the TC ended and the new International Medical Informatics Association (IMIA) was accepted by IFIP in 1980. A new secretary Jan van Egmond, Belgium was elected 1971. He passed away 1978.

Many member countries of TC 4 wanted more freedom from IFIP and that resulted in that TC 4 got the status of Special Interest Group and to organize the first World Congress of Medical Informatics in parallel with the IFIP Congress in Stockholm, Sweden 1974 and a second one in Toronto, Canada 1977. In 1980 IMIA be-



Figure 1. From left to right: Francois Gremy, the first chairman of the IFIP Tc 4, 1967 - 1973., Hans E. Peterson, IMIA President (1983 - 1986), Marion Ball, IMIA President (1992 - 1995), Otto Rienhoff, IMIA President (1995 - 1998), David Shires, IMIA President (1980 - 1983), K. C. Lun, IMIA President (2001- 2004).

came independent from IFIP. The inaugurate meeting took place on May 11, 1979 in Salle Capituami, Paris with speeches of Professor Bailey, WHO, Professor Bobillier, President IFIP, Professor Gremy and Dr. J. Roukens chair TC 4. At the general assembly meeting the following new board was elected: Dr. David Shires USA president, Dr. Hans Peterson Sweden, vice-president and chair By-Laws Committee, William Abbott, U. K. Secretary, Dr. Shigekoto Kaihara, Japan, chair Newsletter Committee and Professor Peter Reichertz, Federal Republic Germany, chair Publication Committee.

2. THE START OF EUROPEAN FEDERATION OF MEDICAL INFORMATICS (EFMI)

The interest to establish a European federation of national medical informatics societies started already one year after the Medinfo Congress in Stockholm (1974). There were three persons that in 1975 had the first discussions and they were J. Roukens, Holland, J. van Egmond, Belgium, and Mogens Jorgensen, Denmark. They started to write statuses and discuss these with a few other interested representatives from other European countries. These persons were called the Preliminary executive group and they held a meeting in Paris in June, 1976, where they decided to invite all known European societies to be represented at a constituent meeting of the Federation of the European Medical Informatics Societies. It was proposed that one delegate with voting right from each Society be present in Copenhagen on September 10 and 11, 1976.

The members present were:

- Barry Barber, UK
- Antonio Perens de Talens Italy
- Francois Gremy France
- Rolf Hansen Norway
- Mogens Jorgensen Denmark
- Hans Peterson Sweden
- Peter Reichertz Federal Republic of Germany
- Jan Roukens Holland
- Jan van Egmond Belgium
- Ilkka Vaananen Finland

In addition two representatives from WHO was invited as they had shown interest for the new Federation and had offered the meeting to be held in the WHO European headquarters premises in Copenhagen and invitation for lunch. They were the head of the headquarters M. Sedeuilh and A. Weber.

Dr. Sedeuilh welcomed the delegates to the Regional Office of WHO hoping that the meeting would prove to be an historic new starting point in the development of activities in the field of medical informatics. He outlined a number of ways in this field and described its continuing interest in joint collaborative action in the development of new initiatives in Health Care. He wished the delegates success in stabling a suitable European Federation. At the meeting Dr. Jorgensen was elected as Chairman and Dr. Barber as Secretary.

It was unanimously agreed that a Federation of European National Societies should be established.

The Federation should have a Council consisting of

one delegate from each member and one Executive committee elected by the Council. The Council should be responsible for accepting or rejecting of applications for membership.

In order to finish the work with the statutes and other outstanding work a Preliminary Executive was appointed as officers and members:

- Dr. A. Remond, France, Chairman
- Dr. B. Barber, UK, Secretary
- Prof. P.L. Reichertz, Treasurer

The members of the preliminary executive had been:

- Dr. M Jorgensen,
- Dr. J. Roukens and
- D. J. van Egmond.

The most important directions of work which have been developed referred to history of health and patient record systems are security, nursing informatics, communication standards and a common terminology (Figure 1).

CONFLICT OF INTEREST: NONE DECLARED.

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